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ABSTRACT

Regular class placement, or mainstreaming, of handicapped children is examined from three aspects, and a number of implications are noted for the clinical portion of preservice teacher preparation programs, with the observation that such programs are lagging behind educational practice in meeting the needs of handicapped children. Examined as aspects of mainstreaming affecting clinical experiences are: decentralization (the capacity of every school and classroom to deal with exceptionality); explicit planning (the preparation of individualized educational plans for each child classified as handicapped); and ecology (consideration of classroom, school, and family situation as they affect the child's learning program). Particular trends and principles under each of these headings are discussed. Implications for the clinical aspect of teacher preparation are seen as including: (1) direct experience with exceptional students; (2) development of consultation skills; (3) development of clinical skills in dealing with parent conferences; (4) interaction among teacher training programs and other school personnel preparation programs; (5) better preparation for systematic management of instruction; (6) development of skills in the details of individualized assessment and instructional planning; and (7) development of understanding and skills in dealing with the formal and legal aspects of due process in education. (HJB)

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Clinical Experiences for Mainstreaming:

The State of the Art

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND THE ERIC SYSTEM CONTRACTORS."

A presentation to the Conference of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
Chicago, February 23, 1978

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Introduction

The state of the art in the clinical aspects of teacher preparation for mainstreaming is primitive but promising. We are in the midst of a major renegotiation of the relation of special and regular (or general) education and many fundamental changes in the roles of educational personnel are entailed. This year is a very special one in that, for the first time, almost all the schools in the nation are engaged in observing the regulations of Public Law 94-142, The Education for All Handicapped Children Act. Implementing the provisions of this act presents enormous difficulties. Indeed, the changes occurring in the schools are running way ahead of our policies and plans for the necessary revisions in teacher-preparation programs. Thus, it needs to be said that while the state of the art is primitive, the context of the art is a highly energized one in which some observers and participants--including this writer--see considerable hope for the future.

It will help, in addressing the specific topics of "Clinical Experiences for Mainstreaming: The State of the Art," to attend briefly to some of the main features of what is called "mainstreaming." These features are discussed under the three headings: (a) decentralization; (b) explicit planning; and (c) ecology. Several particular trends or principles are examined under each heading to help delineate the concepts of mainstreaming. A later section of the paper then summarizes some

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of the implications of mainstreaming for the clinical aspects of teacher preparation.

Decentralization

The mainstreaming movement could well be described as a process of decentralizing special education and related services. This is to say that the drive is toward creating the capacity in every "regular" school and classroom to deal with exceptionality. The goal is to increase the accommodative power as much as possible in every classroom to serve handicapped children there, whenever feasible, rather than to "refer" children with special needs out of regular schools for diagnosis and placement in segregated or isolated settings.

A decentralization trend holds many meaning, including the following:

1. Less referral of children out of regular classes and the bringing of more consultation into such classes.
2. A greater range of individual differences among students in "regular" classes.
3. More giving away of psychology, speech-language pathology, and other specialities so that functions formerly performed increasingly by regular teachers or other generalists, sometimes including noncredentialed paraprofessionals and classroom aides. The often jealously protected and precious boundaries of the specialists are eroding and the specialists are moving into training or consultation roles.
4. More arrangements for collaborative work among teachers and other school personnel in classroom settings. Many specialists are moving out of their special environments and are bringing their insights and helping hands into the regular school environment.

Explicit Planning

One of the compliance requirements under P.L. 94-142 is that an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) be developed for each child classified as handicapped. Literally millions of such IEPs have been produced during the early months of this

school year. Each IEP requires a summary of the assessments of the child, specification of annual educational goals and specific objectives for instruction, specification for and rationalization of placement, details on who will offer the program, and a schedule for review of progress. Parents and at least two school staff members are required to prepare the IEP. Parents not only must "sign off" on the plans but they have many rights for the review of information that is used to shape the plans for their children as well as "due process" rights if they disagree with and wish to contest the plan preferred by the schools.

The formal procedural and planning requirements relating to IEPs have many implications, including the following:

1. Teachers must be prepared to write clear goals and objectives for instruction and to conduct assessments that reflect with precision the progress of individual students.
2. Teachers and other school staff members must be able to conduct fruitful "case conferences."
3. Accountability for "appropriateness" of plans and for competence of performance in delivery on plans emerges as a matter of great concern.

An Ecological Approach

The mainstreaming movement involves a consideration of more than just the student. In effect, the new policy says, "When a child is referred out of a regular class setting, characteristics of the class and the teacher as well as of the child are reflected." It implies that the diagnosis and the treatment must extend not only to the child but to the classroom and the school also. Parents and the family situation are part of the context as well. The parents are expected to contribute their observations and to share in the commitments that are made to change the environment so that is will be more helpful to the student. Some of the implication are as follows:

1. Good communications with parents must be developed.
2. Parents must be trained for their roles in educational planning and monitoring.
3. There must be developed systematic methods of studying classroom and school environments as a basis for improving them as settings for the education of all children.
4. Teachers must be prepared for their expanding roles in parent consultation, supervision of aides, and teamwork with specialists.
5. We must learn to understand child and environmental features in "interactive" terms.

Implications for Clinical Experiences

Let us now turn our attention to some of the implications of the mainstreaming movement for the clinical aspects of teacher preparation. In discussing briefly a series of topics, I try to specify where possible the relevant knowledge bases for development of preparation programs.

1. Direct experience with exceptional students. A first and obvious implication of the mainstreaming trend is that teacher candidates must have direct experience with a wide variety of students, including those with handicaps. Even before students make their decisions to enter teacher preparation they should have opportunities to learn about mainstreaming policies and to acquire some experiences with exceptional students. Perhaps students who are considering entry to teacher preparation could be given experience, for example, in "shadowing" specific handicapped students in their school programs for a day or two and then be assisted in assessing their attitudes about and commitments to individual differences. Of course, of equal importance is the offering to students in teacher-preparation programs of the opportunity to move through an entire sequence of clinical experiences in

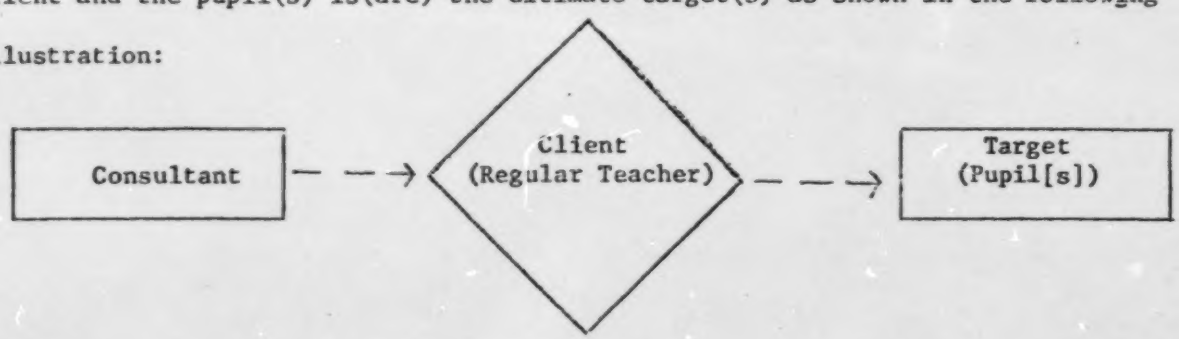
which students of highly diverse characteristics are involved. Teachers in training must have experience with handicapped persons!

2. Consultation. Teachers, under mainstreaming conditions, need to be well informed and highly skillful in consultation functions. There are, of course, a vast literature and several prominent professions in the field of consultation. They will need to be examined as a basis for improved teacher preparation.

As mainstreaming policies are implemented, teachers find themselves interacting increasingly with parents, resource teachers, school psychologists, special education consultants, speech-language consultants, and others. Thus, schooling increasingly involves significant adult-adult-child relationships. Instead of the relatively simple dyadic relationship of teacher and pupil, we face the triad of consultant, client, and target. The consultant may be a special teacher, a school psychologist, a school social worker, a special supervisor, an audiologist, or any one of many other specialists.

The consultant is in the indirect role, the classroom teacher, usually is in the direct instructional role. Often, special teachers do some direct instruction as well--on special topics, such as braille, auditory training, Gillingham reading methods, or whatever--but our concern here is in their functions in the indirect or consulting role. Regular teachers must learn how to use consultants of many kinds.

Consulting, in the present context, is a temporary relationship undertaken voluntarily to help improve instruction for one or more pupils. The teacher is the client and the pupil(s) is(are) the ultimate target(s) as shown in the following illustration:



A few guidelines are suggested for programs preparing regular teachers which should be clinical experiences. These suggestions have been derived from broad theoretical work and experience in consultation functions, but they seem applicable to the rapidly expanding regular teacher/consultant situation. It is doubtful that many teachers have yet had opportunities to prepare themselves didactically or clinically for full adherence to such guidelines.

3. Clinical skills. Teachers need some skills in conducting clinical sessions with parents; that is, they will need insight into and some techniques for dealing with parents' deep emotions in planning for children whose education has been problematic. It is probably the case that many teachers and parents are apprehensive about the conferences and detailed cooperative planning in which they must now participate. Both teachers and parents will need help in overcoming such apprehensions.

4. Interaction among training programs. It is increasingly important that preparation programs for school personnel be conducted interactively. It has been suggested, for example, that teacher trainees will profit from sharing clinical experiences with students preparing to be speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, or special education consultants. The only basis for learning to appreciate the potential contributions of one's colleagues is to have exposure to them in both propositional and procedural terms. Colleges and universities, in the main, have failed badly in bringing related programs together at early stages; as a result, specialists often meet each other in the schools as total strangers. This situation can and should be repaired.

5. Better preparation for systematic management of instruction. Increasingly, teachers must expect to be managers of complex systmes of instruction that include more precise and frequent assessments, greater varieties of materials and methods,

Consultation Guidelines for Teachers

.....Remember that you "own" the problem; you are in charge of the education of the pupil or the classroom procedures that are under consideration.

.....Be sure that there is early agreement with the consultant on the nature of the "problem" and on how decisions about plans for solution will be made. Draw up a contract orally or in writing early in the relationship on goals, methods, and responsibilities.

.....Be sure that it is clear that you (the teacher) are the client--that all communication flows to you. The consultant is there to help you structure your work, not somebody else's. This relationship does not preclude some direct assessment of children and observations in the classroom by the consultant if agreed upon as part of the contract.

.....Avoid status problems. Consultants and clients are co-equals.

.....Avoid entering personal subjective materials (letting attention shift to your personal needs and problems or those of the consultant); instead, keep the content of the relationship centered on the child and the instructional situation.

.....Seek alternative suggestions from the consultant rather than a single or set plan.

.....Try to use each occasion of consultation as a learning experience in increasing effective communication and listening, building trust among professionals, and maximizing instructional effectiveness.

.....Evaluate each consultation experience objectively and share your conclusions with the consultant.

teamwork with aides and specialists, and other elements that are required to serve a range of students in a diverse "regular" school environment. Fortunately, there is a growing literature and practice which can be drawn upon in framing this aspect of teacher preparation; for example, the IGE system and literature.

Besides some familiarity with broad systems for individualizing instruction, it is important that teachers be well prepared in procedures for general classroom management. For example, the Borg formulations,[1] following earlier work by Kounin,[2] could help teachers to manage transitions, using group alerts, issuing behavioral desists, and like matters. Still other approaches to managing group processes and creating cooperative classroom behavior, such as those outlined by Johnson and Johnson,[3] seem extremely important.

6. Diagnostic - prescriptive approaches. Teachers need more understanding of and skills in the details of individualized assessment and instructional planning. A truly notable feature of the present mainstreaming trend is the emphasis on the individual student and the "appropriateness" of a program for him/her as the basis for schooling.

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1. Borg, W. R. Classroom Management (Protocol Materials). Tampa: National Resource and Dissemination Center, University of South Florida (no date).

2. Kounin, J. S. Discipline and Group Management in Classrooms. New York: Holt, Tinehart & Winston, 1970.

3. Johnson, D. W. and Johnson, R. T. Learning Together and Alone. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975.

7. Due process. Teachers also need understanding and skills to deal with the increasingly formal and legalistic format of some educational proceedings. The literature and main aspects of this domain are reasonably clear and should be made a part of teacher preparation without delay.

Conclusion

Mainstreaming currents are running very rapidly in field situations, which means that there is great need to accelerate our attention to these currents in college and university teacher-preparation programs. In effect, we are playing "catch-up" baseball in the clinical aspects of mainstreaming.

If we look back at the discussions in this paper, it is apparent, I believe, that the fundamentals of teacher preparation are at issue. Increasing numbers of people appear to appreciate the fact that mainstreaming is no temporary enthusiasm; it is not another innovation to be domesticated in a year or two. Rather, it is stirring up some of the longstanding issues and promises concerning education for all children and respect for individual differences. A rather remarkable confluence of forces is operating to make the movement a promising and fundamental one.

A final observation is that there is little likelihood that we will prepare teachers in the understandings, appreciations, and skills delineated in this paper if colleges and universities are limited to the small portion of time that is usually allocated for regular teacher preparation. So, the mainstreaming movement helps to raise this larger issue of time and resources for quality teacher preparation.

We cannot deliver on the large promises that are being made to millions of exceptional children and their parents in these busy days until we face up to the larger question of commitment to teacher preparation. If we create a greater space for quality teacher preparation, the mainstreaming movement will help to point us

to new literature, skills, and insights which, I believe, offer higher promise no only to all children in a more fully unified school system but also to ourselves. What has been mere rhetoric about education for <u>all</u> children has been turned to legal rights; and there is opportunity for teacher education to come from the doldrums and the dusty ideas about individual differences to the exciting arena of action. The promising notes of educators on individual differences are being called in for payment!